



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

V.—CONTRIBUTIONS TO PĀLI LEXICOGRAPHY.

PART I.

Pāli *ana-matagga* } ‘having no conceivable beginning’
Prākṛit *ana-vayagga* }
Sanskrit *an-avarāgra* ‘having no starting-point in the past’

It is no exaggeration to say that *ana-matagga*, the stock epithet of the *saṃsāra*, is the most extraordinary and highly significant word in the Pāli language. Apparently, few scholars who have dealt with the word seem to have read what is perhaps the most remarkable chapter of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*—the *Anamatagga Saṃyutta*; and the few who did read it failed to grasp the fundamental thought that runs through the chapter from the first word to the last,—the thought, namely, of the beginningless character of the round of existences. It is the purpose of this paper to settle, if possible, the etymology and meaning of this most remarkable word.

1. PREVIOUS ETYMOLOGIES OF *anamatagga*.

James D’Alwis (*Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 21) divides the word *an* + *amata* + *agga*, ‘which does not end in *Nibbāna*.’ Childers (*Pāli Dictionary*, p. 31) accepts this explanation, but in his *Errata* (*ib.* p. 621) rejects it and confesses that he is at a loss to explain the composition and meaning of the word. Weber (*Indische Streifen*, vol. iii, p. 150) says: ‘*anamatagge saṃsāre möchte Ref. aus anāmatagge (āṃṛita = mṛita) gekürzt ansehen: “ohne Ende und Anfang.”*’ Trenckner (*Pāli Miscellany*, p. 64) divides the word *an* + *a* + *mata* + *agga*, ‘whose end is not known.’ Jacobi (*Wörterbuch zu Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshṭrī*, p. 89) says of the Prākṛit form: ‘*aṇavayagga* (Pāli *anamatagga*, von *√nam*, “mit nicht gebogener Spitze, was immer gradaus läuft”), “endlos.”’ Pischel at first (*Bezzenger’s Beiträge*, iii. 1879, p. 245) was inclined to explain the word as had D’Alwis and Childers (see above), but afterwards changed his mind and adopted a modification of Jacobi’s theory. In his *Grammatik der Prākṛit-Sprachen*,

§ 251, p. 175, he says: 'va ist für ma eingetreten in anavadagga anavayagga = Pāli anamatagga = anamadāgra zu √nam, die auch . . . va hat. . . . Die richtige Erklärung dieses terminus technicus, der ein Beiwort des saṃsāra ist, ist wohl "dessen Anfang sich nicht wegbeugt," = "sich nicht verändert" = "endlos." Die √nam hat richtig erkannt Jacobi, dessen sonstige Erklärung aber falsch ist. Die Scholiasten erklären das Wort mit ananta, aparyanta, aparyavasāna, und fassen meist avadagga avayagga als Deçīwort im Sinne von "Ende," zerlegen also das Wort in an + avadagga.' [For glosses on agga by Buddhaghosa, whose opinion on such matters is worth more than those of ordinary scholiasts, see the next paragraph.] Anderson (Glossary to Pāli Reader, p. 9) comments at some length on previous etymologies of the word and finally accepts the interpretation offered by Jacobi and Pischel: 'endless.' Recent translators, as for example Winternitz in A. Bertholet's Religionsgeschichtliches Lesebuch, pp. 223 f., adopt a tour de force and render the word *without beginning and end*, or *endless*.

2. THE TRUE ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF *anamatagga*.

The proper division of the word, in my opinion, is an-a- + mata + agga. The first element is the reinforced, emphatic negative prefix an-a-, 'not.' For an exhaustive treatment of this prefix, see my paper on The Compound Negative Prefix an-a- in Greek and Indic, American Journal of Philology, XXXIX, pp. 299 ff. The second element is the past passive participle (it might better be called a gerundive) of the root man, 'think,' ma-ta, 'thinkable,' 'knowable,' 'conceivable.' The suffix -ta of ma-ta here very clearly conveys the idea of possibility, as is often the case with this suffix in Indo-Germanic. See Brugmann's Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages, vol. ii, § 79, p. 220; Vergleichende Grammatik, II. 1², § 298, p. 401, § 300, pp. 402 ff.; Griechische Grammatik³, § 216, 1 a, pp. 200 f. The third element is the noun agga (Sanskrit agra), 'beginning.' It cannot be stated too emphatically that agga means 'beginning'; that it does not and cannot possibly mean 'end.' See Böhtlingk-Roth, sub voce agra. Buddhaghosa, at the beginning of his comment on the Etadagga Vagga of the Aṅguttara Nikāya (see Aṅguttara Commentary, Colombo, Ceylon, 1904, p. 76), glosses agga as meaning ādi =

‘beginning,’ koṭi = ‘starting-point,’ seṭṭha = ‘foremost.’ Significantly enough, he never adduces *anta* or *pariyosāna*, ‘end.’

The word *anamatagga* means: *having no known, knowable, thinkable, conceivable beginning; whose beginning cannot possibly be known or imagined; whose beginning is beyond the power of thought to conceive.*

That the etymology proposed is correct, and that the word must therefore mean, not *without beginning or end* or *endless*, but *having no conceivable beginning*, is clear, first from the discussion of the *saṃsāra* in its aspect as *anamatagga* in the *Anamatagga Saṃyutta*, and secondly from the context of the word in many passages in the *Legends of the Saints*.

3. SYNOPSIS OF THE ANAMATAGGA SAṂYUTTA.

In the *Anamatagga Saṃyutta* (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*, xv: vol. ii, pp. 178-193) the Buddha is represented as addressing the monks as follows:

“Without conceivable beginning is this Round of Existences. Unknown is a starting-point in the past of beings impeded by the Impediment of Ignorance, fettered by the Fetter of Craving, hasting, hurrying, from birth to birth.¹ The ancestors of a man are more numerous than all the blades of grass and sticks and branches and leaves in India; more numerous than all the particles of dust that compose the earth. The tears shed, the mother’s milk drunk by a man in his previous states of existence, are more abundant than all the water contained in the four great oceans.

“How long is a cycle of time?—Longer than would be required for a range of mountains a league in length, a league in breadth, a league in height, of solid rock, without a cleft, without a crack, to waste and wear away, were it to be wiped once in a century with a silken cloth; longer than would be required for a heap of mustard-seed of the same dimensions to disappear, were but a single seed to be removed once in a century. Of

¹ *Anamataggo* ‘yaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro, pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānivarāṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsaṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsārataṃ. Similar is the Buddhist Sanskrit version (*Divyāvadāna*, 197¹⁵⁻¹⁸): *Anavarāgro bhikṣavaḥ saṃsāro ’vidyānivarāṇānaṃ sattvānāṃ tṛṣṇāsaṃyojanānaṃ tṛṣṇārgalabaddhānāṃ dīrgham adhvānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsāratāṃ pūrvā koṭir na prajñāyate duḥkhasya.*

cycles of time as long as this, there have elapsed many hundreds of cycles, many thousands of cycles, many hundreds of thousands of cycles. Indeed, it is impossible to count them in terms of cycles or hundreds of cycles or thousands of cycles or hundreds of thousands of cycles. For example, were each of four centenarians to call to mind a hundred thousand cycles of time every day in his life, all four would die or ever they could count them all.

"The cycles of time that have elapsed are more numerous than all the sands that lie between the source and the mouth of the Ganges. The bones left by a single individual in his passage from birth to birth during a single cycle of time would form a pile so huge that were all the mountains of Vepulla-range to be gathered up and piled in a heap, that heap of mountains would appear as naught beside it. The head of every man has been cut off so many times in his previous states of existence, either as a human being or as an animal, as to cause him to shed blood more abundant than all the water contained in the four great oceans.

"For so long a time as this," concludes the Buddha, "you have endured suffering, you have endured agony, you have endured calamity. In view of this, you have every reason to feel disgust and aversion for all existing things and to free yourselves from them."²

4. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE LEGENDS OF THE SAINTS.

The Legends of the Saints contain much to the same effect. For example, in *Petavatthu* ii. 13, stanza 12, the Buddha thus addresses Ubbarī, weeping for her dead husband: "You have been a woman, you have been a man, you have been a beast. Consider! there is no limit to the number of your past lives" (*atitānaṃ pariyanto na dissati*). There are several fine specimens in the *Dhammapada* Commentary.³ In i. 1 *Cakkhupāla* says to himself: "In the round of existences without conceivable beginning, there is no counting the number of times you

² Incidentally it may be said that this *Anamatagga* *Samyutta* is the gospel of Buddhism in a nutshell.

³ For a complete translation of these legends, see my *Buddhist Legends from the Dhammapada Commentary*, Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 28-30.

have been blind" (*anamataggasmiṃ saṃsāravatṭe tava anak-khikakālassa gaṇanā n'atthi*). In ii. 1. 6, end, *Sāmāvati*, just before she is burned to death, admonishes her attendants as follows: "Even with the [infinite] knowledge of a Buddha, it would be no easy matter to count the number of times our bodies have thus been burned, as we have passed from birth to birth in the round of existences without conceivable beginning" (*anamatagge saṃsāre*).

In viii. 12 the Buddha thus comforts the bereaved *Paṭācārā*: "In weeping over the death of sons and others dear to you in this round of existences, you have shed tears more abundant than all the water contained in the four great oceans." The story goes on to say that as the Buddha thus discoursed on the Beginningless (*evaṃ Satthari anamataggapariyāyaṃ kathente*), her grief was assuaged. In xiii. 4 the Buddha thus addresses *Abhaya*, sorrowing over the sudden death of his nautch-girl: "There is no measuring the tears you have thus shed over the death of this girl in the round of existences without conceivable beginning." In xiii. 7 the Buddha thus comforts a weaver who has lost his daughter: "Grieve not, for in the round of existences without conceivable beginning you have thus shed over the death of your daughter tears more abundant than all the water contained in the four great oceans."

5. ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF PRĀKRIT *aṇavayagga*.

Prākṛit *aṇavayagga* is the exact equivalent of Pāli *anamatagga*, sound for sound, and conveys precisely the same idea. It occurs in one of Jacobi's selections from the Prākṛit: ⁴ *Abhiī . . . aṇāiyaṃ aṇavayaggaṃ saṃsārakantāraṃ aṇupariyaṭṭissai*. Meyer translates the passage as follows: ⁵ 'Abhiī . . . will stray to and fro in the beginningless, endless tanglewood of the *saṃsāra*.' But *aṇavayagga* is here very evidently employed as a synonym of *aṇāi* (Sanskrit *anādi*). It is a familiar practice of Hindu writers, whether Sanskrit, Pāli, or Prākṛit, to set side by side two or three or four synonymous expressions for the sake of greater emphasis and clearness. The passage should be translated as follows: 'Abhiī . . . will stray to and fro in the tangle-

⁴ H. Jacobi, *Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshṭri*, p. 33¹⁶⁻¹⁸.

⁵ J. J. Meyer, *Hindu Tales*, pp. 113 f.

wood of the saṃsāra, which has no beginning, no known starting-point.'

6. ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF SANSKRIT *anavarāgra*.

The epithet commonly applied to the saṃsāra in Classical Sanskrit is *anādi*, 'beginningless.'⁶ But in Buddhistic Sanskrit, which may be aptly characterized by saying that it is nothing more than Sanskritized Pāli, the word *anādi* is never thus applied. Instead is used *anavarāgra*, a back-formation from the Pāli-Prākṛit.⁷ Since the compound negative prefix *an-a-* does not occur in Sanskrit⁸ the Sanskrit writers were hard put to it to coin a word resembling *anamatagga* *aṇavayagga* both in sound and meaning. But their ingenuity was equal to the task. Ultimately from the Pāli *anamatagga*, but more immediately from the Prākṛit *aṇavayagga*, they evolved, by redivision and modification working under the influence of popular etymology, the word *anavarāgra*. This word should, in my opinion, be divided *an-* 'not' + *avara* 'in the past' + *agra* 'starting-point.' It thus means *having no starting-point in the past*, and expresses, although by no means with such emphasis, substantially the same idea as Pāli-Prākṛit *anamatagga* *aṇavayagga*.

The correct interpretation of Pāli *anamatagga*, Prākṛit *aṇavayagga*, Sanskrit *anavarāgra*, is of the greatest importance to a correct understanding of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. For the primary mission of the Buddha was to deliver mankind from the terrible jungle, the frightful ocean, of the round of existences, and the aspect of the round of existences which haunted the mind of the Buddha, the aspect with which he terrified the minds of his hearers, was its aspect as *anamatagga*.

It is utterly impossible, says the Buddha, for a human being so much as to imagine a beginning of this frightful round of existences. But there is a way for him to make an end of it. If he would be delivered from the horrors of repeated existences, he must get rid of Craving, the cause of rebirth. He must enter upon the Noble Eightfold Path and follow it to the end, even

⁶ See Böhtlingk-Roth, sub voce.

⁷ See *Divyāvadāna*, 197¹⁵⁻¹⁸; *Mahāvastu*, i. 346-8, iii. 2733.

⁸ See my paper on The Compound Negative Prefix *an-a-* in Greek and Indic, *American Journal of Philology*, XXXIX 299 ff.

to the plucking out of the Eye of Existence, even to Nibbāna.
For,—

Not only does this Path destroy ill-will,
But it also shuts the gate of hell,
And utterly dries up that boundless, frightful
Ocean of suffering, the round of existences,
Whose beginning it is utterly impossible to imagine.

Na kevalaṃ ayaṃ maggo dosanāsaṇaṃ eva ca
Karoti atha kho 'pāyadvāraṃ pi pidheti ca
Anamatagga-saṃsāra-vatṭa-dukkha-mahodadhiṃ
Aparaṃ atighoraṃ ca soseti ca asesato.

Abhidhammāvatāra, 1333 f.

EUGENE WATSON BURLINGAME.

YALE UNIVERSITY.